

Arizona Early Childhood Initiative

Creating Inclusive Settings and Opportunities

Arizona Early Childhood Inclusion Coalition

Expanding Opportunities

Expanding opportunities is a cross agency initiative to promote inclusive options for young children with disabilities. In response to recommendations generated at forums, the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) invited cross agency teams from 4 states to participating in a strategic planning initiative. At the federal level, the Child Care Bureau, Head Start Bureau and Administration on Developmental Disabilities (ADD) in collaboration with Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute-University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center and the National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (NECTAC) sponsored state level representatives to establish Chapel Hill, NC with the goal to improve the number of preschool students who receive services in inclusive environments.

- August 2005, the Arizona Early Childhood Inclusion Coalition was formed in North Carolina consisting of representatives from the Arizona Department of Education, Childcare Bureau, Arizona Head Start Association, DES AzEIP, the Arizona Division of Early Childhood (DEC), Northern Arizona University, and a representative of the Parent Information Network (PINS), College. A preliminary vision and mission statement was developed and the group determined that more stakeholders were needed. As a result, group representatives identified our desire to engage in dialogue and share resources.
- October 4th & 28th, meetings were held with identified stakeholders that were considered funding sources. Information was shared about each organization. The group felt it was important to have an understanding of each organization and how they provide services to children and families to assist in future collaboration. Information was inserted into a matrix to serve as a foundational source of information for the group. Further discussed the purpose of the coalition and shared a suggested mission statement developed by the group in North Carolina.
- January 11, 2006. School Readiness Board Presentation by Mary Warren. Created Vision and Mission Statements. Group consensus was to move in a direction of having more ECIC members participate in various committees and report back to ECIC (some members are already on various School Readiness Board committees). Plan is to invite original members back to the table and invite additional organizations to the table. Next step is to further set the agenda and direction of the group and further determine the challenges to inclusion and develop strategies to address those challenges.
- April 5, 2006. Expanded group membership and brought back original members/stakeholders. Reviewed vision/mission statement. Expanded on barriers from August 2005 meeting and developed initial strategies.
- May 2006. Strategies subcommittee met to determine overlapping strategies of ECIC and School Readiness Board (SRB). ECIC met May 19th. Developed an Operational Structure and Action Plan.
- October 2006. Updates from the group. Generated list of talking points to use when communicating with others about the work or focus of the Coalition. Draft of 5 points to be developed at the next meeting.
- January 2007. Updates from group; updates from School Readiness Board committee members. Reviewed draft of talking points; clarified purpose of a talking points document would be used for.

- July and September 2007: A small workgroup met to discuss the future direction of the ECIC. The group was committed to continue the Coalition and discussed potential areas of focus. The group brainstormed ideas, which were then categorized into three areas of focus for the next few years: (1) professional development; (2) public awareness and advocacy; and (3) collaborative partnerships. Given the large amount of work for each, the group decided that over the next year, the focus would be on professional development with the goal to gather information and resources on inclusion in the State of Arizona that could be used across agencies and programs, including child care, Early Head Start/Head Start, preschool and early intervention. The information could also be used to supplement what programs already use for training on inclusion. The information would be posted on the ECIC website to be accessed by the public.
- October 2007 – The small workgroup updated the Coalition from its summer meetings and discussed the suggestions for future focus of the group. The group watched the video “Christopher’s Story” from the SpecialQuest series. The Coalition moved forward with the new focus breaking into small groups to work on gathering information and materials on inclusion. Amy Corriveau provided information from her attendance at The Seventh National Early Childhood Inclusion Institute. Allison Landy provided updates on the Early Childhood Development and Health Board and also shared with the Coalition the professional development opportunity offered by the National Professional Development Center on Inclusion. The Coalition supports the opportunity and will ensure all members are aware of it.
- January 2008 – Work continued in small groups to share information and develop inclusion materials for the website. The group decided to develop frequently asked questions as well as general information about inclusion, including a historical perspective. Allison Landy provided updates from the Early Childhood Development and Health Board. She also discussed the national inclusion professional development opportunity. She is proceeding with her internal work seeking to write the application for the State.
- April 2008 - NPDCI announcement/application